

INFORMATION REPORT

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SUPPLEMENT TO
REPORT NO.

SUBJECT United Nations Prisoners of War at the Yongwon,
Hwap'ung, and Kahung-ni camps
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- On 25 November 1950 there were about 3,000 ROK prisoners of war, 20 ROK army nurses, and 40 United States and other United Nations prisoners of war in the grounds of a primary school building in Yongwon (126-32, 39-50) (B: 8912). Prisoners in the camp included members of the ROK 5, 7, and 8 Divisions, who claimed they had been surrounded by more than 100,000 Chinese Communist troops in mid-November. The commander of the ROK 5 Division was in the camp on 25 November disguised as a private. One ROK prisoner of war stated that a United States army major who had been assigned to the ROK 7 Division as a military adviser was confined in the school building. The prisoners isolated some ROK military personnel who had stolen civilian clothing to disguise themselves as refugees or laborers conscripted by the ROK Army. Questioning of those in civilian clothing by the representatives of the North Korean State Security Bureau and the Chinese Communist army was less severe than that given military personnel, but the question the Chinese put first to every prisoner was whether there were Japanese troops fighting with the United Nations, they appearing to fear this possibility. One Chinese guard offered a cigarette to a South Korean held as a prisoner of war, and expressed sympathy with his plight, saying he too had once been a prisoner, suggesting that the Chinese had been a Nationalist soldier at one time. A large number of prisoners escaped from this camp in late November.
- On 4 December the prisoners in the camp at Yongwon were ordered to walk to Kanggye (126-36, 40-58) (BA 9837) and carry wounded Chinese Communist troops on their backs. Four prisoners formed a group to carry one wounded Chinese. Immediately before the prisoners departed for Kanggye, 30 ROK and three other United Nations prisoners were executed because they were too weak to follow on foot.
- Enroute to Kanggye on 7 December, one group carrying a wounded Chinese fell back out of sight of the Chinese guards, threw their burden into the Ch'ongch'on River (125-38, 39-37) (YD 2688), and attempted to escape. They were recaptured at a village eight miles north of Sunch'on (125-56, 39-25) (YD 5267), and confined in a house in another village nearby where 2,500 ROK and 20 other United Nations prisoners were held. On 12 December all prisoners in the village were sent to the Hwap'ung Mine (125-57, 40-42) (YF 4909), where there were about 300 prisoners who had arrived previously. The four recently recaptured prisoners believed the bulk of the Yongwon prisoners had been transferred to the Hwap'ung Mine.

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4. At the Hwap'ung Mine camp, interrogation of prisoners was carried out in a more thorough manner than previously had been the case. They were repeatedly questioned on their experiences, economic and social background, and their parents and grandparents, to determine whether the prisoner could be classed as a poor farmer, wealthy farmer, landlord, or laborer. In addition to North Korean army and State Security Bureau personnel, there were five Soviet military personnel of unknown rank who appeared to be advisers, and a larger number of Chinese Communist officers who took over the interrogation of those prisoners who they estimated were of greater importance. In the evenings, indoctrination courses and discussion groups were organized by the North Koreans, who appeared to be proud of their achievement in carrying on such activity close to the battle lines.
5. Conditions in the Hwap'ung Mine camp were fair. Civilians and soldiers of the rank of private were put to work collecting firewood for the use of Chinese Communist troops. The NCO's and officers were not assigned to such work. The prisoners were supplied with a small amount of boiled cornmeal or beans for their daily food, the amount falling far short of their needs. No cigarettes were distributed, and the prisoners smoked dried leaves instead. Warm water was scarce. Both the ROK and the other United Nations prisoners quarrelled among themselves over the distribution of food, water, and other scarce necessities. There was no discrimination in the treatment of ROK and other United Nations personnel, although they were quartered separately at all times.
6. On three different occasions in January 1951 groups of several hundred prisoners each were transferred from the Hwap'ung Mine to unannounced destinations. It was rumored among the prisoners, however, that one group of about 100 persons, including ROK army personnel who were members of the Korean Labor Party and some civilians, were sent south carrying leaflets which urged the surrender of United Nations soldiers and promised good food and treatment to them. Three of this group were:

PAK Nam-sik (朴南植), aged 25, owner of the Chunggang Beauty Parlor in Taegu, South Korea, and a private first class in an ROK medical battalion.

SO Yoo-ha (孫有夏), aged 26, an ROK private, who lived near PAK.

SONG Sok-t'ae (宋石泰), a private first class in the ROK 10 Regiment.

Some of the group of 100 were sincere and enthusiastically pro-Communist, but it was obvious that others were merely pretending to be sympathizers in the hope they would secure better treatment or have the chance to return home.

7. The fourth group of prisoners to leave the Hwap'ung Mine included 467 prisoners of war. They departed the mine 1 February on foot, and arrived at the Wiaesong (125-27, 38-53) (YD 1206) Mine, 15 miles southwest of Pyongyang, on 6 February. Daily duties of the prisoners included repair of the air-raid shelters, of which there were ten at the mine, each capable of accommodating about 300 persons. The group of 467, however, were the only persons at the mine in early February. On 15 February the group was moved to civilian houses at Taep'o-dong (125-29, 39-12) (YD 1441) in Taep'o-myon, and on 22 February some of them were given North Korean winter uniforms and insignia.

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Apparently the group had been selected for further political training, but on 7 March they were transferred to Kahung-ni (125-23, 38-58) (YD 0615) in Susan-nyon near Kangso. There the group, still numbering about 465 persons, was divided into squads of eight men each, and placed in the charge of a North Korean army sergeant. Each squad held weekly meetings in which all discussed certain subjects suggested by the sergeant, or criticized themselves; most of the criticisms were fabricated by the prisoners to satisfy the sergeant. The usual weekly meetings included the following:

- a. Appeal meeting. At this meeting all the prisoners spoke of their underprivileged lives and described their personal grievances against some superior.
- b. Accusation meeting. These meetings provided the prisoners with the chance to confess their past misconduct, tell of their good deeds, or accuse others of incorrect views.
- c. Determination meetings. On these occasions, following the preparatory speeches at the appeal and accusation meetings, the prisoners were supposed to express their resolve to better themselves.

Participation in these meetings was supposedly voluntary, but since the sergeant in charge of the squad requested each to speak and took careful and detailed notes on the speech and actions of each man, the prisoners were forced to admit misconduct of which they had not been guilty and show determination they actually did not feel.

2. At the Tongwon, Hwap'ung, and Kahung-ni camps it was Communist policy to encourage the prisoners to betray the officers who had mixed with them in the guise of enlisted men, which actually had been done by most of the officers captured. Prisoners who reported officers so disguised were rewarded with a transfer to the mess section of the camp, and those who uncovered three or more officers were promoted to the position of mess squad leader and thus given an opportunity to secure slightly better food. Few prisoners purchased these privileges at this price. On several occasions at these camps, United Nations prisoners were forced to make recordings for propaganda broadcasts, while others were told to lie on hillsides in groups of four or five and smile while photographs were being taken. Some were made to stand in front of the camera while small girls pinned flowers on their chests.

10. It was rumored among the prisoners at these camps that a camp at the Ch'olma (125-02, 40-12) (XE 7351) Mine held ROK prisoners of war,¹ and that at another in Chihwa-ri (126-41, 38-37) (BT 9676) there were United Nations prisoners of war other than ROK troops. They also heard that ROK military and civilian prisoners under 27 years of age were being recruited early in 1951 for the North Korean army and given military training at Yedong-ni, Susan-nyon (125-23, 38-58) (YD 0615), about 20 miles north of Chinnamp'o.

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1. [REDACTED] Current: The Ch'olma camp held 200 United States prisoners of war in June 1951, according to [REDACTED]

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